

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-4804

ENERGY AND NATURAL
RESOURCES COMMITTEE
ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE
SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON AGING
BANKING, HOUSING, AND
URBAN AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

December 11, 2014

The President
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

I was encouraged by your statements showing support in principle for a congressionally approved Authorization for the Use of Military Force (AUMF) related to our conflict with the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL). I write today to ask that you submit such a request to Congress immediately, so that we may debate its merits and your strategy, before more American men and women are sent into harm's way.

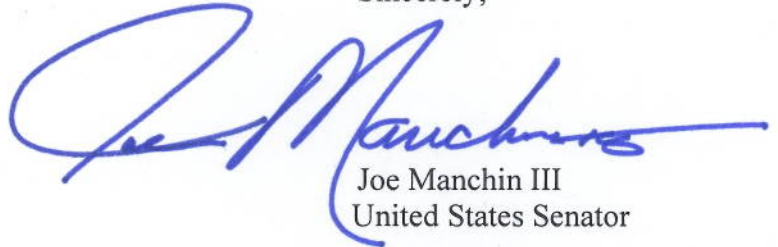
My position with regard to the conflict with ISIL is by now well known. I support, as all my colleagues do, the military, intelligence, and law enforcement actions that prevent attacks on American property or persons. You have said as much yourself, and there is unanimity in such purpose. But before we commit more of our nation's blood and treasure to political reform and religious settlement in the Middle East, we must acknowledge that a decade of war, trillions of dollars of financing to be paid by future generations, and some 4,500 American lives were not sufficient to establish the pro-western representative democracy that was once envisioned.

For these reasons I am adamantly opposed to sending American troops into Syria to further escalate a ground war that I do not believe is in the best interest of America or the region. History has taught us that militarily training and arming Syrian rebels of uncertain provenance will put the United States on a path that leads inevitably to regime change and nation-building in Syria. Such a course defies the lessons of the American-led military operations of the last twelve years. I cannot in good conscience justify to the people of West Virginia support for this course of action.

And while I caution against repeating the mistake of Middle Eastern nation-building, I reiterate my strongest support for our military, intelligence, and law enforcement professionals who are today defending Americans at home and abroad from the vile atrocities perpetrated by terrorists. They demonstrate every day that we have the capability to identify terrorists and prevent them from doing harm to America. If I thought that sending military trainers and weapons to Syria would further that end or would make Americans safer, I would support doing so. I do not.

Mr. President, submit to Congress your proposed AUMF. Allow us to give the American people the public debate they deserve, before we find ourselves again in an open-ended war in the Middle East.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Joe Manchin III". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "J" and "M".

Joe Manchin III
United States Senator